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AWARENESS ON ORGANIC FARMING AMONG THE FARMERS AND CONSUMERS OF DUDHNOI, GOALPARA, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the growing opportunities in the field of organic farming, there has been little effort in research front regarding awareness and attitude of organic farming followers. There is an urgent need to create a data base on various aspects of organic farming followers in order to reorient the research agenda and train extension and development workers in organic farming. Keeping in view of this importance, the present study was undertaken with a main objective **"Awareness on Organic Farming among the farmers and consumers of Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Assam"** The outcome of this study shows that the majority of the respondents were from old age group, possessed graduation/post-graduation level of education, good annual income, Considering the personal profile of the respondents, all possible efforts should be made to encourage the organic farming followers for organic farming. The results of this study will facilitate in knowing the characteristics of the organic farming followers which would serve as a guideline for the planners, policy maker and implementing agencies related to promote organic farming.

Keywords: Organic farming, Farmers and Consumers, Awareness, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, Assam

INTRODUCTION

After the post green revolution in India, it lead to substantial increase in the production of food grains through the use of improved crop varieties and higher level of inputs viz; fertilizers and plant protection chemicals. These results in stagnation or even decline in production and productivity of major crops, receding ground water table in many areas, low diversity of production system, increasing production costs, leaving agriculture as an uneconomic and non-viable enterprise for resource poor farmers. The damage caused through agrochemical pollution to environment and human health is found to be irreparable (Thakur et al., 2003).

In the first decade of twenty first century, organic farming gained international recognition as a viable substitute to conventional farming. There is an increasing awareness about health and

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environmental pollution, resulting into preference and demand for organic foods by consumers. The popularity of organic farming is gradually increasing and now organic agriculture is practiced in almost all courtiers of the world. Its share in agricultural farms has been growing.

As per documented evidence, organic agriculture in India started long back in 1900 by Sir Albert Howard, a British agronomist, in local village of North India. Since then, farmers in some parts of India are practicing it either by default or in the absence of resources. The commercial organic farming, as practiced today, is still at a nascent stage. According to a survey, India has about 5,28,171 hectare area under organic agriculture (including certified and area under organic conversion) accounting for about 0.3 per cent of total agricultural land (Pandey and Singh, 2012). The total area under organic certification is 5.21 million hectare (APEDA, 2013). India accounts 11 per cent by quantity and 3 per cent by value of organic produce in the world market. The total Indian organic farming industry is currently estimated at around US$ 20 million/Rs 100 crore. The Indian organic sector has already made inroads into the world organic market with certain commodities such as tea, coffee, spices, semi processed pineapple, dried banana, vegetables, desi cotton, basmati rice, dried nuts, sesame oil, pulses and sugarcane.

During the year 2000, the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) was launched. In India, a regulatory framework has been formally announced in June 2001. Government of India has identified four organizations as accreditation agencies for inspection and certification of organic products. They are APEDA, Tea board, Coffee Board and Spices Board under the Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India. Recently, Coconut Development Board and Directorate of cashew nut Development under the ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India have also been authorized to give accreditation to qualified inspection and certification agencies.

The market for edible organic products in India is growing at 25-30 per cent, but awareness about organic farming is still low despite huge spending, the government said on Thursday.

A study projected that the domestic organic food market would touch the $1.36 billion mark by 2020. In 2014, the size of the organic food market, which is highly unorganised, was $0.36 billion, and organic pulses and foodgrains grabbed the lion’s share of the market, said the study by industry chamber Assocham and TechSci Research.

The study noted that the level of awareness about organic food products was limited to consumers in Metro cities and suggested that companies in collaboration with the government should organise awareness and training programmes for farmers and consumers. It also recommended that organic producers should focus on pulses and foodgrains to maximise earnings, besides tapping the export potential in West and South-East Asia, which have concentration of high net worth individuals.

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According to government data, organic farming is practised in 12 States on about 4.72 million hectares. In 2013-14, organic food production was 1.24 million tonnes.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To study the personal profile of the organic farming followers
2. To study the constraints faced by the organic farming followers and seek their suggestion to overcome the constraints of organic farming

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Place of study: Goalpara district, of Assam is situated between 25°33' and 26°12/ North latitude and 90°07/ and 91° 15' East longitude. The district occupies an area of 1,832 Sq.km. It is surrounded by West and East Garo Hill districts of Meghalaya on the South and Kamrup district on the East, Dhubri district on the West and river Brahmaputra along the North.

The district has five Revenue Circles. These are (1) Lakhipur Revenue Circle (2) Balijana Revenue Circle (3) Ronjuli Revenue Circle (4) Dudhnoi Revenue Circle and (5) Matia Revenue Circle. There are 81 (eighty one) Gaon Panchayats, 8 (eight) Anchalik Panchayats and 834 Revenue villages in the district.

Dudhnoi, a taluk in Goalpara district of Assam, India is located at 25°59′0″N 90°44′0″E at an elevation of 44 m above MSL.

A total of 120 cultivators who are engaged with organic farming were interviewed using Questionnaire to assess their awareness and constrains faced during organic farming.

RESULTS

Age

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their age

Sr.	Age group	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Young age	21	17.50
2.	Middle age	33	27.50
3.	Old age	66	55.00
Total		120	100.00

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It is clear from the data that the majority of the organic farming followers (82.50 per cent) were from old to middle age group. The probable reason for the results might be that the old and middle aged respondents had understood very well about the importance of organic farming for saving the natural resources like land, water, environment, etc for future.

Education

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their level of education

Sr.	Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	07	05.84
2.	Functionally literate	15	12.50
3.	Primary school	05	04.16
4.	Middle school	16	13.33
5.	High school	19	15.84
6.	Graduation/Post graduation	58	48.33
Total		120	100.00

In general, it is seen from the above table that majority of the organic farming followers (77.50 per cent) had possessed middle school to graduation/post graduate level of education. This result indicates that the education had helped them to understand about importance of organic farming and aspects related to organic farming in present situation and the respondent had also experienced and understood the significance of education for their better standard of living.

Annual income

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their annual income

Sr.	**Annual income**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1.	Up to Rs. 50,000	04	03.33
2.	Rs.50,001 to 1,00,000	10	08.33
3.	Rs. 1,00,001 to 1,50,000	07	05.84
4.	Rs.1,50,001 to 2,00,000,	19	15.84
5.	Above Rs. 2,00,000	80	66.66

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Total	**120**	**100.00**

In general, it is seen from the above table that the majority of the organic farming followers (66.66 per cent) had received more than Rs. 2, 00,000 as their annual income.

The probable reason might be due to that the good irrigation facilities, rain fall is also good and other resources for farming are prevailing in the study area. Farmers of the study area are taking minimum two crops in a year.

LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE RESPONDENTS ABOUT ORGANIC FARMING

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their level of awareness about organic farming

Sr.	Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low level of awareness	14	11.66
2.	Medium level of awareness	80	67.34
3.	High level of awareness	26	21.00
	Total	**120**	**100.00**

(Mean= 60.78, S.D=15.81)

It is clear from the data that the majority of the organic farming followers (88.34 per cent) had medium to high level of awareness about organic farming. It might be due to the fact that majority of the farmers had good literacy status, social participation, membership in organization working on organic farming and mass media exposure and thereby they were well aware about organic farming. This finding is in line with the results reported by Jaganathan *et al*. (2009), Shashidahra (2012), Slathia *et al.* (2013) and Parmar *et al.* (2015).

CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to the constraints faced by them in organic farming

Sr.	Constraints	Percentage	Rank
1.	High cost of inputs	78.25	I
2.	Lack of knowledge about resistant varieties	72.25	II
3.	Non-availability of inputs like vermi-compost, bio-fertilizer, bio-pesticides, etc.	67.12	III

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4.	Lack of scientific information regarding organic farming	63.00	IV
5.	Lack of proper training about organic farming	56.45	V
6.	Non-availability of appropriate literature related to organic farming	52.00	VI
7.	Difficult to control pest, diseases and weeds in organic farming	48.25	VII
8.	Lack of Government support to follow organic farming	45.75	VIII
9.	Lack of assured marketing network for organic products	40.00	IX
10.	No price premium in local market for organic products	35.45	X
11.	Certification procedure is very complicated and expensive	33.00	XI

The constraint refers as situation or circumstances which impede or restrict the activity or a performance of an individual. In this study, it was operationalized as the items of difficulties faced by farmers to carry out their day to day operations related to organic farming. Constraints play vital role in adoption. The open ended question was included in interview schedule to know the constraints faced by the farmers in organic farming. The frequency of constraint was summed up separately and converted into percentage.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the farmers were in the old age group and had medium size of land holding. Majority of the respondents had medium level of awareness towards organic farming. Education had positive and highly significant relationship with their awareness, while education, occupation and mass media exposure had positive and highly significant relationship with their knowledge. Whereas, education, occupation, land holding, mass media exposure, scientific orientation and innovativeness had positive and highly significant relationship with their attitude towards organic farming.

High cost of inputs were perceived by organic farming followers as their main constraint followed by lack of knowledge about resistant varieties, non-availability of inputs like vermi-compost, bio-fertilizer, bio-pesticides etc., lack of scientific information regarding organic farming, lack of proper training about organic farming and non-availability of appropriate

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literature related to organic farming. The organic farming followers pointed that the reduction in cost of inputs required for organic farming, developing location specific varieties of crop for organic farming, adequate agricultural inputs for organic farming should be provided, awareness and training programme on organic farming should be organized through government agencies, Quality product of bio-pesticide and bio-fertilizers required for organic farming should be made available and the Government support is must for promotion of organic farming.

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